Scenes from Avellaneda, Argentina

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Beyond the bridge where cops marauded piqueteros,¹
we wend walking through helter-skelter pathways
past hovelled plywood, roofed with tin,
where rain must bongo, where no water-mains run.
Boys play soccer beside the open-sewer lanes,
and ask for condoms to strut their manhood-yet-to-come.

We pass out needles for users' needs,
and visit dusky shanty rooms where kids receive
a little milk and bread for free.

Between the hovels and high-rise no-go-violent
public homes,
eight men chat below the burning shining sun
and tend gleeful darling babes asleep in cardboard
cribs.

Their beer bottles bounce avid sunbeam rays
off cocaine's crystal menace, meant to enliven
endless workless days.

(My mind meanders to New Orleans scenes
just like this steaming Avellaneda villa
though New Orleans bans the life-saving needle gifts
inviting the virus to finish what Katrina began.)

References

- Birss, M. (2005). The *Piquetero* movement: Organizing for democracy and social change in Argentina's informal sector. *The Journal of the International Institute* 12(2). URL: <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.4750978.0012.206>.

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¹ The piquetero (meaning "picketeer") movement gained national and international attention during Argentina's economic collapse in December 2001, which left over 50 percent of those in the greater Buenos Aires area below the poverty line and more than two-thirds of the urban workforce jobless (Birss 2005).